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ACTION EUR-00

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FOR EUR/UBI, EUR/PAO, INR/R

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TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, BE

SUBJECT: BRUSSELS MEDIA REACTION Iraq

I. (iraq) Iraq

"When Bush Learns from his Mistakes"

Baudouin Loos in left-of-center Le Soir (12/21) (circ. 100,200) editorializes: "As the saying goes, only stupid people never change their mind. George Bush has changed his mind. Last week, the U.S. President finally and reluctantly accepted that Congress explicitly reaffirms that torture is prohibited - it is true that he was running the risk of seeing his defense budget blocked.

"After that, he suddenly admitted that he allowed wiretapping in the U.S. without any legal mandate, arousing the anger of many elected officials. But George Bush went even further: in four speeches between November 30 and December 14, he changed his mind on Iraq. While a year ago he said during a press conference that he was unable to see one single mistake during his career, George Bush now admitted that the training of Iraqi forces did not take place as he had hoped, that the reconstruction of the country was also facing problems, that the Iraqi population had suffered heavy losses - he even gave a figure of 30,000 - and lastly, that the intelligence on which he had based himself to attack Iraq was wrong.

"Listing the CIA's secret prisons, the domestic spying, and 'all what we do not know yet,' the Washington Post

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yesterday drew an implacable conclusion on the Bush Administration, writing that 'it gravely harmed U.S. prestige throughout the world and, more specifically, the United States' ability to demand fair treatment for its soldiers and to urge other nations to respect human rights.'

"That is the lesson: the legitimate need to protect U.S. citizens, especially after 9/11, has led Bush and his Administration to go too far and to flout America's core values. Will the hundreds ghost-prisoners of Guantanamo need to wait for another mea culpa of George Bush before being entitled to a fair trial?"

II. Media reaction report prepared by Pierre Manderlier (French and Dutch). Tel: 32-2-508-2412.

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